

CONTINUED INVESTMENT TO CLOSE THE GAP

STATEMENT BY
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14 MAY 2013



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INDIGENOUS BUDGET STATEMENT—INTRODUCTION

The Australian Government is committed to Closing the Gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

The Closing the Gap framework, established by the Australian, state and territory governments in 2008, has ended the previous ad hoc approach to addressing Indigenous disadvantage and is reversing decades of underinvestment and neglect.

Closing the Gap has delivered unprecedented levels of investment by governments across seven interlinked areas, known as ‘building blocks’. This investment has been driven by three imperatives: overcoming decades of underinvestment in Indigenous infrastructure and services, supporting personal responsibility, and building respect between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.

Record targeted investment under the Closing the Gap framework has led to positive results. However, the Government recognises much more needs to be done to address Indigenous disadvantage.

Under the Closing the Gap framework, six ambitious targets have been set to close the gap between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. These relate to life expectancy, child mortality, education and employment.

The Closing the Gap target that all Indigenous four-year-olds living in remote communities have access to early childhood education by 2013 will be met this year. Two other targets, relating to mortality rates for Indigenous children and education attainment rates, are either on track to be met or are ahead of schedule.

This progress is encouraging and we want to maintain these advances to ensure the benefits flow through to other Closing the Gap targets and further address Indigenous disadvantage.

The 2013–14 Budget continues to build on the Government’s unprecedented investments to close the gap, with \$1.6 billion of new investment in areas such as health, education, constitutional recognition and engagement, and infrastructure to further reduce Indigenous disadvantage.

Major initiatives such as DisabilityCare Australia, the National Plan for School Improvement and the delivery of vital homelessness services will also help to improve the lives of Indigenous Australians.

The Australian Government will work with Indigenous stakeholders and state and territory governments to continue our shared effort to close the gap.

In addition, \$783.5 million of Australian Government investment is being provided to improve Indigenous health and remote Indigenous internet access through National Partnership Agreements to be renegotiated with states and territories.

The Australian Government has announced \$777 million to fund its share of a renewed National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes for a further three years to 30 June 2016. This funding will ensure Indigenous Australians continue to benefit from improved health services and support our commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

The Government is also investing \$6.5 million over three years to 30 June 2016 to continue a National Partnership Agreement to support Indigenous communities and individuals to participate in the digital economy and access government services online. The Agreement for Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access Training and Maintenance will support the ongoing operation and maintenance of public internet facilities delivered under the original agreement, and deliver training to Indigenous people in the use of online technology.

We are also continuing to implement key reforms, including:

- Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory (\$3.4 billion over 10 years to 30 June 2022) – the Government’s commitment to work with Aboriginal people in the Northern Territory to tackle the unacceptable levels of disadvantage that are still experienced by too many people.
- Remote Jobs and Communities Program (\$1.5 billion over five years) – will start on 1 July 2013 and provide a simpler, more integrated and flexible approach to participation and employment services for people living in remote areas of Australia.
- Remote Indigenous Housing (\$5.5 billion over 10 years until 30 June 2018) – more than 5300 homes in remote Indigenous communities have been rebuilt or refurbished by the Government, nearly two years ahead of schedule; the Government is also on track to meet its ambitious target of 4200 new homes being built by 2018, with more than 1600 houses having been constructed to date.
- The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development in partnership with states and territories (\$564.4 million over six years until 30 June 2014) is supporting early learning, helping Indigenous families and improving the health of mothers, babies and young children.
- Remote Service Delivery (\$291.2 million over six years until 30 June 2014) – has delivered significant results to date in 29 priority Indigenous locations across Australia, including new early childhood centres and programs, new and upgraded schools, youth facilities and health clinics and support to strengthen community

governance. In addition, more local employment and training opportunities have been created.

The Australian Government is further strengthening its commitment to Closing the Gap by:

- Investing \$659 million to extend funding under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act* to maintain targeted education programs for Indigenous students and to align the program with the implementation of the National Plan for School Improvement.
- Providing an additional \$10 million to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) in 2012–13 to help young Indigenous people attend boarding schools. This new support brings the Government's overall investment in the AIEF to \$32 million since 2008, benefitting more than 2300 Indigenous students.
- Investing \$12 million over the next four years in the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program to support 204 new scholarships for Indigenous students in years seven, eight and 11.
- Providing \$24.5 million to extend the Cape York Welfare Reforms for two calendar years to 31 December 2015. This funding will build on the significant gains already made in restoring local Indigenous leadership and rebuilding social norms, school attendance, and parental responsibility and will continue the work of the Family Responsibilities Commission. This investment also includes new measures to further support school enrolment and attendance and provide better support for disengaged youth in participating communities.
- Providing \$44.1 million to extend the Municipal and Essential Services program to 30 June 2014, which will ensure that Indigenous Australians in about 340 remote communities across Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Victoria and Tasmania continue to receive municipal and essential services.
- Investing \$6 million to deliver environmental health benefits and vocational training in the Northern Territory communities of Wutunugurra and Canteen Creek through the Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program.
- Investing \$6.2 million to improve the quality of hostels operated by the Australian Government-owned Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL). AHL runs a national network of hostels that provide safe, comfortable, culturally appropriate and affordable accommodation for Indigenous people.
- Investing \$10 million over two years to continue aviation safety upgrade works through the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program to ensure people in remote communities have access to health and emergency services and regional centres.

- Committing almost \$320 million with state and territory governments in 2013–14 to tackle homelessness and continue critical homelessness services under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness. Since 2008 the National Partnership Agreement has provided \$1.1 billion for new and better integrated accommodation and support services for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including programs targeted to Indigenous Australians.
- Providing the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples with \$1.3 million over two years to support the work to establish a parliamentary and community consensus on referendum proposals.
- Investing \$15 million over three years from 2014–15 to continue funding operations of the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples. The Congress is a national representative body for Indigenous Australians which provides leadership in advocating for the status and rights of Indigenous peoples.
- Investing \$14.4 million over four years to support the continued operation of Reconciliation Australia, which aims to improve relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- Providing \$655.6 million over the next 18 months for a new National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education to ensure all Australian Children have the opportunity to participate in early childhood education.
- Investing \$1.3 million over two years to continue the Government’s investment in Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children to provide a strong evidence base to improve the design and delivery of services for Indigenous children in their early years.
- Committing \$127.5 million to extend three key programs that help young Australians, including young Indigenous Australians, get a qualification, transition towards further study or training and gain employment.
- Investing \$16.5 million over four years to continue trachoma control activities to improve eye health for around 20,000 Indigenous Australians. The infectious eye disease occurs in remote and very remote Aboriginal communities, mainly in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.
- Providing \$3.9 million over four years to continue funding mosquito control activities to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever in the Torres Strait and to the mainland.
- Providing \$12 million over two years for additional legal assistance and support, including funding to specialised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services.

- Providing \$10.3 million over four years in additional funding for Community Legal Centres, including local centres whose work includes a focus on the needs of Indigenous clients.
- Providing additional funding of \$11.3 million over four years through Creative Australia to the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program to support Indigenous art centres and professional development for artists.
- Providing additional funding of \$1.7 million over four years for arts training organisations as a part of Creative Australia to secure the future of national Indigenous arts training organisations including the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association Dance College.
- Providing \$14 million over four years through Creative Australia to extend the Indigenous Languages Support Program, which supports the maintenance, revival and development of traditional languages.
- Providing \$3 million to extend the Community Development Financial Institutions pilot for a further year to June 2014 to assist disadvantaged Australians, including Indigenous people, with access to safe and affordable credit.

These initiatives build on the Australian Government's existing efforts to close the gap, which include ongoing Indigenous-specific and mainstream National Partnership Agreements with states and territories.

Indigenous-specific National Partnership Agreements

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory – \$3.4 billion over 10 years to 2022

This funding is focused on:

- Schooling
- Health
- Community safety and justice
- Child, youth, family and community wellbeing
- Tackling alcohol abuse
- Housing
- Municipal and essential services
- Alice Springs transformation
- Remote engagement and coordination.

Remote Indigenous Housing – \$5.5 billion over 10 years to 2018

This funding is:

- Building 4200 new houses
- Refurbishing houses (the target of refurbishing 4876 houses has already been exceeded with over 5315 completed by February 2013)
- Creating Indigenous jobs
- Making sure houses are built to last
- Reforming tenancy arrangements to ensure houses are well cared for and maintained.

Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes – \$1.6 billion over four years to 2013

This funding is:

- Tackling chronic disease and its risk factors, including smoking
- Expanding health services for Indigenous people
- Strengthening the Indigenous health workforce.

Indigenous-specific National Partnership Agreements (continued)

Indigenous Early Childhood Development – \$564.4 million over six years to 2014

This funding is:

- Supporting early learning
- Helping Indigenous families
- Improving the health of mothers, babies and young children
- Establishing 38 Children and Family Centres providing child care, early learning and parenting and family support programs.

Remote Service Delivery – \$291.2 million over six years to 2014

This funding is:

- Increasing access to services and raising the range and standard of government services
- Improving the level of governance and leadership within Indigenous communities and Indigenous community organisations
- Providing simpler access and better coordinated government service for Indigenous people, through a single government interface
- Increasing economic and social participation.

Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access – \$7 million over four years to 2013

This funding is:

- Connecting Indigenous Australians in remote areas with telecommunications and training in internet access and basic computer use.

The Government is continuing to build relationships with Indigenous people based on mutual respect and shared goals and is working in partnership with Indigenous people to deliver positive change.

Our 10-year, \$3.4 billion Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package is delivering services that are making Aboriginal communities safer places for families to live, particularly for women and children, and is creating local job opportunities for Aboriginal people.

Reflecting the Government's commitment to building stronger relationships and working towards a more reconciled nation, we are supporting meaningful constitutional recognition for Indigenous people and believe a referendum to bring about such change should be held when it has the most chance of success.

To help make this a reality, the Government has provided Reconciliation Australia with \$10 million to promote public awareness and community support for Indigenous constitutional recognition. In addition, the Government is providing \$1.3 million over two years in the 2013-14 Budget to the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples to work to establish a parliamentary and community consensus on referendum proposals.

An Act of Recognition was enacted by the Australian Parliament earlier this year to recognise the unique and special place of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the first people of Australia.

CLOSING THE GAP BUILDING BLOCKS

The seven interlinked building blocks are the focus of targeted investment under the Closing the Gap framework, and progress in one area often relies on progress across other building blocks.

These building blocks are: early childhood, schooling, health, healthy homes, economic participation, safe communities, and governance and leadership.

EARLY CHILDHOOD

The Government wants all children to have the best possible start in life. The environment in which children are brought up is fundamental to how they develop as young people and can help to establish positive patterns of behaviour that lead to success in school and adulthood.

The first of the Closing the Gap targets, that all Indigenous four-year-olds living in remote communities have access to early childhood education by 2013, will be met this year. This is the result of historic levels of investment by governments through the National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education.

The Government is now working to ensure this improved access leads to improved school attendance so children continue to build on the great start that a preschool or kindergarten program provides.

This Budget builds on the unprecedented levels of investment that have ensured more Indigenous children than ever before now have access to preschool or kindergarten programs.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Early Childhood

New National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education

The Australian Government will provide \$655.6 million for a new National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education for 18 months to 31 December 2014. The National Partnership Agreement ensures that all Australian children have the opportunity to participate in quality early childhood education in the year before full-time school. This is in addition to the \$970 million provided by the Australian Government since November 2008.

The National Partnership Agreement underpins the Closing the Gap target that all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote locations would have access to early childhood education, which will be met this year.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Early Childhood (continued)

Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children

The Government is providing \$4.3 million over two years to support the continuation of Longitudinal Surveys, including \$1.3 million for Footprints in Time: The Longitudinal Study of Indigenous Children. This study tracks the long-term development of more than 1600 Indigenous children, with the cooperation of parents and teachers, in 11 sites across Australia with the aim of identifying the factors that assist these children to ‘grow up strong’.

These initiatives build on the investments the Government has already put in place to support Indigenous early childhood development.

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development

The National Partnership Agreement on Indigenous Early Childhood Development is providing \$564.4 million over five years from June 2009 to June 2014. It aims to improve outcomes for Indigenous children in their early years and contributes to the Closing the Gap agenda by:

- Establishing 38 Children and Family Centres, which bring together important services for children and families including child care, early learning and parenting and family support programs.
- Increasing the access to and use of antenatal care by young Indigenous mothers and supporting young Indigenous people to make informed decisions about their sexual and reproductive health.
- Increasing access to and use of maternal and child health services by Indigenous families.

The National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education

Through the original National Partnership Agreement on Early Childhood Education, the Australian Government has provided \$970 million since November 2008 to ensure that children will have access to a quality early childhood education program by mid-2013, delivered by a four-year university-trained early childhood teacher, for 15 hours a week, 40 weeks a year, in the year before full-time schooling.

The Australian and state and territory governments set a Closing the Gap target that all Indigenous four-year-olds in remote locations would have access to early childhood education. Known as the ‘universal access’ target, the Australian Government has worked across jurisdictions, and with communities and the community sector, to ensure that appropriate support is available to families so that all Indigenous children have access to affordable, quality early childhood education in the year before formal

schooling. The early childhood target will be met this year. We are also beginning to see progress in the development and wellbeing of Indigenous children, with the Australian Early Development Index showing a decrease from 47.4 per cent in 2009 to 43.2 per cent in 2012 in relation to Indigenous children who were developmentally vulnerable on at least one of the five assessment areas at the time they commenced school.

Stronger Futures—Children, Youth and Families

The Australian Government is committing more than \$442.4 million over 10 years to the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Child, Youth, Family and Community Wellbeing package. The package provides 15 new Communities for Children sites in remote communities. These will be implemented in three phases starting in 2013-14. The Northern Territory Government will be supported to expand the Remote Aboriginal Family and Community Workers program and to continue two Mobile Child Protection Teams and the Women's Safe Houses at 16 existing sites. Intensive Family Support Services will continue to be funded and new services will be established in up to 15 additional communities. Eight playgroups will also continue to be funded.

Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY)

Since the initial implementation in 2008, the Australian Government has committed more than \$100 million to the Home Interaction Program for Parents and Youngsters (HIPPY), a two-year home-based parenting and early childhood enrichment program targeting families with young children. The program's approach develops the foundations for learning in the home during children's crucial early years. Government funding has supported ongoing program delivery in 50 mainstream locations and expanded the program to an additional 50 locations, with an emphasis on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. With this expansion, HIPPY will be operating in 100 locations across Australia from 2015, targeting around 2250 children (aged four years) each year.

Budget-based funding for childcare services

The Government will provide \$62.7 million in 2013-14 to contribute to the operational costs of around 340 early childhood education and care and school age care services. The Government's funding ensures Indigenous families are able to access culturally appropriate services.

Budget-based funding services are predominately located in rural, remote and Indigenous communities. In many cases, these children are some of the more vulnerable children in Australia. The facilities provide children and their families with accessible, affordable and culturally appropriate early childhood education and care and school age care services. This helps children get ready for schooling, engages parents in their children's education and enables parents to participate in the workforce.

Communities for Children

The Government is investing \$333.5 million from 2011 to 2014 to fund the Communities for Children program, which provides locally tailored prevention and early intervention services to increase child safety and wellbeing in disadvantaged communities throughout Australia. Services provided through the program are giving parents the skills to make sure their kids are growing up in a safe, happy and healthy environment.

Communities for Children, which includes \$91.3 million for a specific Indigenous Parenting Services component, provides funding for services such as parenting support programs, supported playgroups and home visiting services to address known risk factors that impact on the parenting capacity of families. The Communities for Children model develops and implements a whole-of-community approach to early childhood development, through partnerships with all levels of government, service provider organisations, community leaders, businesses, early childhood stakeholders and parents. Communities for Children services provided support to nearly 75,000 Indigenous clients as at February 2013.

Through the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, the Australian Government is providing \$98.9 million over 10 years for the new Stronger Communities for Children (SCfC) program, which aims to give Aboriginal children and young people the best possible start in life so they can grow up strong, healthy and confident. The SCfC program will be implemented in 15 remote Northern Territory communities in three phases. Services will be established in Ngukurr, Galiwinku, Wadeye, Ntaria and Santa Teresa from July 2013, with a further roll out in Gunbalanya, Maningrida, Utopia homelands, Engawala and Lajamanu in 2014. Another five communities will benefit from July 2017.

SCHOOLING

A good school education provides children with a strong platform for much that follows later in life. It means a better chance at further education and training, a better chance at a good job, and greater opportunities in the future.

The Australian Government wants all Indigenous Australian children to enjoy the benefits that flow from a good education no matter where they live. The new National Plan for School Improvement will ensure every Australian child is able to get a world-class education, regardless of where they live, the school they attend, or their family background.

It will establish a new, fairer school funding approach based on the needs of individual students and linked to reforms that will improve school performance. Extra money will be available for schools and students most in need including Indigenous students and schools in remote communities.

Government investment through the National Plan for School Improvement will help to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage through funding targeted at:

- every school receiving the funding it needs
- placing high quality teachers and principals in every school
- giving more support to students who need it most
- improving school results
- giving more information to parents and the community about school performance.

Loadings will also be applied for students from low socio-economic status backgrounds, Indigenous students, students with disability, students with limited English proficiency, small schools and schools in remote areas.

The new Schooling Resource Standard will deliver an additional \$9.8 billion over six years from 2014–15 for Australian schools, including directing specific additional funding to help Indigenous students achieve improved outcomes. This loading will provide between 20 and 120 per cent extra funding per Indigenous student, depending on the number of Indigenous students at the school. The new standard will also provide further support for students in low socio-economic areas and in regional and remote locations.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Schooling

Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act

The Government is investing \$659 million to extend funding under the *Indigenous Education (Targeted Assistance) Act*. The funding will be maintained for programs and projects such as the Parental and Community Engagement Program and the Sporting Chance Program which increase the engagement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in education. These programs are complementary to mainstream schooling.

More support for Indigenous students to complete secondary school

The Australian Government is investing a further \$22 million in programs that help young Indigenous people finish their secondary education and go on to university studies.

The Government will provide an additional \$10 million to the Australian Indigenous Education Foundation (AIEF) in 2012–13. The scholarships offered by the AIEF are helping young Indigenous people across the country to attend boarding schools. This new support brings the Government's overall investment in the AIEF to \$32 million since 2008, benefitting more than 2300 Indigenous students.

The Government will also invest \$12 million over the next four years in the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program. This funding will support 204 new scholarships for Indigenous students in years seven, eight and 11. Since 2006, the Indigenous Youth Leadership Program has assisted more than 1500 Indigenous secondary and tertiary students with their education.

Youth Attainment and Transitions—supporting young people to get an education, skills and a job

The Australian Government will commit \$127.5 million to extend three key programs that help young Australians, including young Indigenous Australians, get a qualification, transition towards further study or training and gain employment. The Government is extending the Youth Connections program (\$76.9 million), the School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers) program (\$46.9 million) and national career development initiatives (\$3.6 million) for 12 months until December 2014.

Youth Connections specialises in re-engaging young people in education or training by offering holistic, flexible youth support services such as individualised case management. Around 20 per cent of young people who participate in Youth Connections are Indigenous.

Partnership Brokers build partnerships that enable schools and their communities to work together, share resources and implement local solutions to support young people to complete school and make a successful transition to further education, training and employment. Just over half of the schools supported by Partnership Brokers are from regional and remote areas of Australia, with 20 per cent of the partnerships having an Indigenous focus.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Schooling (continued)

The career development initiatives that will be extended include national resources such as the *myfuture* career website and the Job Guide, helping young Indigenous Australians manage their careers and enabling them to engage more effectively in the workforce.

The Australian Government already has a range of measures and agreements in place that are improving outcomes for Indigenous students and helping to meet Closing the Gap targets.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory investment—Schooling

To improve schooling outcomes in the Northern Territory, the Government is providing \$583.4 million over 10 years under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package. Initiatives funded under this measure include:

- building a quality school workforce, including 200 additional teachers in remote communities
- provision of an additional 100 teacher houses in remote communities
- a school nutrition program
- support to increase school attendance
- support for students with learning and hearing difficulties.

Teach Remote

The Australian Government provided \$5 million to establish the Teach Remote program in 2011, which is building a high status, high quality, committed and competent teaching workforce in remote Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities across Australia. To continue this work, the Government announced in May 2012 an additional \$14.3 million for Teach Remote Stage 2.

The Teach Remote Stage 2 program includes the Experienced Teacher Bonus for Remote Schools Package, which will provide a one-off \$10,000 bonus to eligible experienced teachers who complete a year of full-time teaching in a National Alliance for Remote Indigenous School (NARIS), and a further one-off \$20,000 bonus on completion of their second year in a NARIS school. The Package also offers a professional development bonus of \$1000, partnering with a highly skilled and experienced mentor who has a good understanding of working in remote schools, and access to online networking with other NARIS teachers.

Indigenous Youth Career Pathways Program

The Indigenous Youth Careers Pathways (IYCP) program provides support to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander secondary students in Years 11 and 12 to stay in school and undertake school-based traineeships. A total of 6400 traineeships will be offered through the program, which aims to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people transitioning effectively from school into further education or training, and employment. Funding of \$50.7 million has been allocated over four years until 2014–15. As at 31 December 2012, 1064 individuals had commenced the program.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Action Plan is a partnership between the Australian Government and state and territory governments which details targets, performance indicators and actions across six key areas that will help close the gap between the education outcomes of Indigenous and non-Indigenous students. Work has been progressing across the following areas:

- Readiness for school
- Engagement and connections
- Attendance
- Literacy and numeracy
- Leadership, quality teaching and workforce development
- Pathways to real post-school options.

Governments publicly report on progress each year on the website of the Standing Council on School Education and Early Childhood. The Australian Government is investing \$128 million between 2010 and 2014 to accelerate improvements under the Action Plan.

HEALTH

Good health is a vital foundation for a productive and fulfilling life, from birth through to old age.

This Budget continues the Government's commitment to closing gap in health outcomes between Indigenous Australians and the wider population, and in particular recognises the need to improve the health and wellbeing of Indigenous people living in regional and remote parts of the country.

Progress is being made towards Closing the Gap in Indigenous health outcomes and the Government is investing in programs to ensure this progress continues.

Our investment acknowledges the particular need to address health outcomes in the Northern Territory – the jurisdiction where the widest gap in health outcomes exists between Indigenous and non-Indigenous people. The Government is investing \$713.5 million over 10 years to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package.

The Government is also working closely with Indigenous Australians and their representatives to develop the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan. This plan will help to develop initiatives that will close the gap in life expectancy and child mortality between Indigenous people and the broader population.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Health

National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes

The Australian Government will invest \$777 million to fund its share of a renewed National Partnership Agreement on Closing the Gap in Indigenous Health Outcomes for a further three years to 30 June 2016.

This funding will ensure Indigenous Australians continue to benefit from improved health services and support our commitment to close the gap on Indigenous disadvantage.

In particular, the health funding will help to achieve our commitment to close the gap in life expectancy between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians within a generation, and to halve the gap in mortality rates for Indigenous children under five within a decade.

The Australian Government has asked the states and territories to also continue their investment to renew the National Partnership Agreement.

Under the current National Partnership Agreement, due to expire on 30 June 2013, governments provided \$1.57 billion over four years to improve access to health services for Indigenous families and communities.

The Australian Government provided \$805.5 million over four years for this initial agreement. The renewed funding of \$777 million over three years is an increase over previous per annum expenditure.

DisabilityCare Australia

The Australian Government is investing \$14.3 billion to roll out DisabilityCare Australia, the national disability insurance scheme, across the country by July 2019.

DisabilityCare Australia will meet the needs of Indigenous Australians with significant and permanent disability by delivering increased care and support for Indigenous people in rural, remote, and urban areas. The scheme will also consider cultural sensitivities in the assessment and planning process and build on the strengths of community inclusion. It will also help build the capacity of Indigenous Australians and organisations to deliver support and care.

Improving Trachoma Control for Indigenous Australians

The Improving Trachoma Control for Indigenous Australians initiative will provide \$16.5 million over four years from 2013–14 to improve eye health for around 20,000 Indigenous Australians. The initiative will continue activities to eliminate trachoma in Australia, including screening and appropriate treatment. Trachoma is an infectious eye disease that can cause years of discomfort and poor vision, leading to blindness. The disease occurs in remote and very remote Aboriginal communities, mainly in the Northern Territory, Western Australia and South Australia.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Health (continued)

Torres Strait Health Protection Strategy—Mosquito Control

The Government is investing \$3.9 million over four years to continue funding mosquito control activities to prevent the spread of mosquito-borne diseases such as dengue fever in the Torres Strait and to the mainland. Funding will also support communication and coordination between Australia and Papua New Guinea to reduce communicable disease risk in the Torres Strait.

Regional Aviation Access Program—remote airstrip upgrade funding component—extension

The Australian Government will invest \$10 million to continue the Remote Airstrip Upgrade Program for two years. This will provide aviation safety upgrade works at remote airstrips across Australia, including in remote Indigenous communities.

Safe, operational airstrips are essential for remote communities to have continuing air access, especially during the wet season when roads are often closed for weeks at a time. Critical services relying on the works include the Royal Flying Doctor Service and weekly access flights supported by the Australian Government under the Regional Aviation Access Program, which provide passengers access to regional centres as well as essential food and educational supplies. This program strongly supports Closing the Gap priority initiatives for health and education.

In addition to these 2013–14 Budget initiatives, the Government is delivering a number of other measures to help address Indigenous disadvantage in health outcomes.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan

The Australian Government is currently developing a new National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan in partnership with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and their representatives. The Health Plan will support the Government's efforts to close the gap in life expectancy and child mortality between Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders and the broader population. It will target areas of health that are in most need of improvement, including the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples living in regional, rural and remote locations. The new Health Plan is expected to be finalised in 2013.

Dental Reform Package

The Government's \$4.4 billion Dental Reform Package, announced by the Australian Government on 29 August 2012, will benefit both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Measures include \$2.7 billion for a Child's Dental Scheme, Grow Up Smiling, that will commence on 1 January 2014 and provide services for up to 3.4 million eligible children; a \$1.3 billion National Partnership on Adult Public Dental Services from 1 July 2014; and a \$227 million Flexible Grants Program commencing in 2014. This is in addition to \$345.9 million in Australian Government funding provided for in the 2012–13 Budget for the National Partnership on Treating More Public Dental

Patients for the states and territories to alleviate pressure on public dental waiting lists. This National Partnership Agreement will provide additional services for up to 400,000 patients currently waiting for public dental care, and has a particular focus on high risk patients and Indigenous Australians.

Mental Health

Indigenous Australians will benefit from the Government's investments in mental health, particularly those targeting prevention and early intervention (especially for children and young people) and better outcomes for people with severe and debilitating mental illness.

The 2011-12 Budget made a significant investment in National Mental Health Reform, with many existing programs expanded and new initiatives introduced. Indigenous Australians will benefit from all of these initiatives, particularly increases in funding to the Access to Allied Psychological Services Program, to increase Indigenous Australians' access to these services and to support suicide prevention.

Community-based mental health services

The 2011-12 Budget included \$269.3 million to be invested over five years in community-based mental health services to assist more than 35,000 Australians with mental illness and their families and carers, including Indigenous people. Investments included:

- \$154 million for 425 additional Personal Helpers and Mentors, mental health workers who work one-on-one with people with mental illness to provide practical help to achieve their personal goals and manage everyday tasks. The program delivers specialist remote services that have a strong focus on cultural, mental and physical healing for Indigenous people. In 2011-12, these services assisted 1578 participants who identified as Indigenous
- \$54.3 million to expand Mental Health Respite Carer Support services
- \$61 million to establish 40 additional Family Mental Health Support Services.

The 2011-12 Budget investment also included the delivery of 13 new Targeted Community Care Program services in remote locations that have large Indigenous populations.

Indigenous Suicide Prevention

In September 2011, the Government announced the establishment of the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Advisory Group to provide guidance on the development of Australia's first national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Suicide Prevention Strategy. The Advisory Group has also provided strategic advice on priorities for the investment of \$6 million for Indigenous suicide prevention activities under the Taking Action to Tackle Suicide package. This work will continue

through the newly formed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Mental Health Advisory Group. This Ministerial group will provide advice to Government on ways to improve the mental health and wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and on ways to prevent suicide in Indigenous communities.

Bringing them Home and Link Up services

The 2011–12 Budget provided \$39.1 million over four years to continue the Bringing Them Home and Expanding Link Up Programs for the Stolen Generations. These programs provide counselling, family tracing and reunion services to members of the Stolen Generations and their families and communities. Services are provided through eight Link Up organisations and over 90 Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations located across Australia.

This measure complements the Government's investment in mental health and suicide prevention, and supports connection to family, country and culture, which are key determinants of good mental health for Indigenous people.

Addressing substance misuse

Significant investments are also being made through the Substance Misuse Service Delivery Grants Fund to address the needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people affected by substance misuse. In 2013–14, around \$65 million will be directed to assisting Indigenous communities to provide service delivery or to supporting those services targeting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory—Health

The Australian Government is investing \$713.5 million over 10 years to improve the health and wellbeing of Aboriginal people under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package that was announced in the 2012–13 Budget. Initiatives funded under this measure include:

- Continued operational support for Aboriginal community-controlled primary health care services
- Hearing and oral health services for children
- Short-term placements of health professionals to fill workforce shortages
- Counselling and support for people experiencing trauma from child abuse and neglect
- Additional alcohol and other drug workers.

The Government is also providing \$40.8 million over 10 years through Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory to continue the licensing of stores in the Northern Territory. Stores are an important source of food, drink and groceries for remote Aboriginal communities. This investment will expand the scheme to include more stores and provide more support to help stores stay open to service local people.

In addition, the Aboriginal Benefits Account has allocated \$55.8 million to upgrade and construct new stores and store manager housing in 18 communities throughout the Northern Territory. Works commenced in 2012 and are expected to continue through to 2015.

ECONOMIC PARTICIPATION

The Australian Government is committed to ensuring Indigenous Australians can experience the social and financial benefits that a good job provides.

This Budget reflects the high priority the Government places on creating jobs and employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

The Government is ensuring more jobs will be created for local Aboriginal people in remote Northern Territory communities by establishing employment targets for all Australian Government-funded services delivered as part of Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

In addition, the Remote Jobs and Communities Program will start on 1 July 2013, providing a simpler, more flexible approach to participation and employment services for Indigenous people living in remote areas of Australia.

The Government's program to improve the quality of housing in remote Indigenous communities across Australia is also leading to significant employment outcomes for local Indigenous people, with jurisdictions consistently meeting or exceeding the set 20 per cent target for Indigenous employment on new housing construction.

The Government is also supporting Indigenous businesses and jobs by making it easier for its agencies to procure services from small to medium enterprises that are at least 50 per cent Indigenous owned through an exemption to the Commonwealth Procurement Rules. The exemption allows Government agencies to contract directly with Indigenous organisations without the need to conduct a full tender process on the condition the procurement represents value for money. The exemption can be applied to any procurement over \$80,000.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Economic Participation

National Partnership Agreement for Remote Indigenous Public Internet Access Training and Maintenance

The Government is investing \$6.5 million over three years to 30 June 2016 to continue to support Indigenous communities and individuals to participate in the digital economy and access government services online. The Agreement will support the ongoing operation and maintenance of public internet facilities delivered under the original agreement and deliver training to Indigenous people in the use of online technology.

Creative Australia—Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program

The Government is providing additional funding of \$11.3 million over four years to the Indigenous Visual Arts Industry Support Program to support Indigenous art centres and professional development for artists. This investment includes funding to develop a nationally-accredited training package to enhance the knowledge, flexibility and skill base of people working in the Indigenous visual arts industry. More than 6500 Indigenous artists are involved in art centres across the country, providing vital cultural hubs in Indigenous communities and allowing all Australians to appreciate and enjoy Australia's world-renowned Indigenous art.

Creative Australia—National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association (NAISDA) Dance College

Additional funding of \$1.7 million over four years will be provided for arts training organisations as a part of Creative Australia to secure the future of our national Indigenous arts training organisations, including the National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association Dance College.

The college provides Indigenous youth with the opportunity to undertake traditional and contemporary Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander dance training.

Community Development Financial Institutions

The Government is providing \$3 million to extend the Community Development Financial Institutions (CDFI) pilot for a further year to June 2014. The pilot extension fills a gap for vulnerable Australians who are able to repay a loan but are excluded from mainstream finance because of low incomes or poor credit history. Four organisations will share in the funding, which will assist disadvantaged Australians with access to safe and affordable credit that reflects their means and their ability to repay, and to financial literacy training through budgeting assistance or money mentoring.

An evaluation of the CDFI pilot found that CDFIs were successful in targeting individuals who were financially excluded. This included a large proportion of clients who were Indigenous, as three CDFI organisations worked specifically to improve financial inclusion in Indigenous communities. Approximately 2000 Australians are expected to directly benefit through the pilot initiative, including more than 600 Indigenous Australians.

The new initiatives contained in the 2013–14 Budget complement existing national agreements and investments that promote Indigenous economic development.

Remote Jobs and Communities Program (RJCP)

Following extensive consultation with remote communities, the Australian Government is introducing significant reforms to employment, participation and community development services to help more Indigenous people get into jobs and participate in their communities.

From 1 July 2013, RJCP will provide a more streamlined and flexible employment and participation service providing the skills people need to get jobs and participate in their communities. There will be a single service provider with a permanent presence in each of the 59 remote regions, providing a local point of contact for employment and participation services.

The Government will provide \$1.5 billion over five years to fund the program.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Jobs package

The Australian Government is providing greater employment and economic opportunities for Aboriginal people in remote communities across the Northern Territory under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory jobs package, including through the following components:

- Supporting 50 ranger positions in the Northern Territory under the Working on Country program over five years
- Employment-based traineeships to assist up to 100 Aboriginal people fill service delivery related jobs in major remote townships under the Local Jobs for Local People initiative
- Working with the Northern Territory Government to guarantee jobs for Aboriginal students completing Year 12 in major regional towns
- Extending the Indigenous Communities in Business Program to two further communities to help people develop business ideas
- A commitment to Aboriginal employment targets as part of all Australian Government Stronger Futures-funded measures, maximising local employment opportunities.

Working on Country Indigenous Ranger Program

The Working on Country Indigenous Ranger Program currently supports more than 680 Indigenous rangers to deliver environmental outcomes. Working on Country helps to protect the environment and provides permanent jobs for Indigenous people. The Government is providing more than \$320 million over five years from July 2013 to

support Indigenous rangers. This includes \$19.1 million over four years in support for 50 ranger jobs as part of the Northern Territory Stronger Futures Jobs Package, which will bring the total number of rangers on the ground to over 730 in coming years.

Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund

The \$22.3 million over five years Indigenous Carbon Farming Fund provides assistance to Indigenous Australians to participate in the carbon market. Funding for this program, which commenced in 2012–13, provides training, legal support and advice on participating in the carbon market.

Indigenous Employment Program

The Australian Government has established the \$650 million Indigenous Employment Program which is investing in training and placing Indigenous people into employment.

Since 1 July 2009, the program has placed more than 50,300 Indigenous Australians into jobs and delivered training and work experience to 55,700 more. In the 2011–12 financial year, the program exceeded its placements target by 25.5 per cent.

National Indigenous Television

Australia's first dedicated national Indigenous free-to-air television service was launched in December 2012, with Australian Government funding of \$63 million over four years. People across the country can now access the National Indigenous Television (NITV) service on digital channel SBS4 and through the Viewer Access Satellite Television service. The new NITV service has a majority of Indigenous staff and will continue to use the talents of Indigenous writers, directors and journalists.

Community Broadcasting Program

The Community Broadcasting Program, within the Department of Broadband, Communications and the Digital Economy, also supports Indigenous broadcasting. The Community Broadcasting Program provides an annual grant to the Community Broadcasting Foundation, an independent non-profit funding agency, which distributes the funds through a range of competitive grant programs to the community broadcasting sector. Indigenous broadcasting groups and Indigenous stations may also seek funding for transmission, accredited training, content and production, replacement of radio equipment, and operational costs. Special project and sector coordination grants are also provided. In 2013–14, the Australian Government will provide the Community Broadcasting Foundation with an estimated \$1.2 million in targeted funding to support Indigenous community radio broadcasting, including radio content development.

Indigenous Broadcasting Program

The Indigenous Broadcasting Program supports Indigenous radio and media in metropolitan, regional and remote communities by providing assistance for operational expenses, content production, training and professional skills development. The program funds projects which contribute to the Australian Government's Closing the Gap agenda through the broadcasting of key economic, education, employment, environmental, health, emergency services and other community services information.

The main objectives of the Indigenous Broadcasting Program are to help Indigenous broadcasters become stronger and build a more sustainable Indigenous broadcasting sector. In 2013-14, \$15.8 million will be made available in funding to administer the Indigenous Broadcasting Program.

Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy

The Northern Australia Quarantine Strategy within the Department of Agriculture, Fisheries and Forestry employs 34 Indigenous staff to deliver biosecurity surveillance functions in coastal areas between Cairns and Broome (including the Torres Strait). Other Indigenous community liaison officers located across northern Australia facilitate animal and plant health surveillance, public awareness functions, and the delivery of biosecurity monitoring services. The program also engages 38 Indigenous communities across northern Australia on a fee-for-service basis to undertake a range of biosecurity monitoring activities in support of animal and plant health surveillance.

In 2013-14, the Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation will invest \$150,000 in the Northern Australia Beef Industry Strategy Indigenous Pastoral Project. This project aims to develop a step-by-step framework providing Australian Indigenous pastoral communities with clear pathways to follow to assist them to develop their properties into more productive enterprises, on a commercially viable and sustainable basis.

Research and development to benefit Indigenous Australians

The Fisheries Research and Development Corporation (FRDC) will invest approximately \$0.7 million in 2013-14 in research and development to benefit Indigenous Australians. The FRDC supports Indigenous engagement, research development and extension, culture and customs in the Australian fishing industry.

In 2013-14 the FRDC will also continue to offer a minimum of one Indigenous Development Scholarship, worth \$10,000. These scholarships are awarded to individuals who seek to help shape the social and economic future of their community region through engagement with the fishing industry, including fisheries management, commercial (including aquaculture) or customary use of sea resources.

The FRDC has established an Indigenous Reference Group to assist in working towards articulating and delivering research development and extension priorities for Indigenous Australians. This group will continue to perform an important advisory role for FRDC during 2013-14.

HEALTHY HOMES

Ensuring Indigenous people can live in safe, properly constructed and well-maintained homes is an important part of reducing Indigenous disadvantage. Decent housing is critical for protecting children and improving health, education and employment outcomes. Improving the quality of housing is also critical to building Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory.

More than 5300 homes in remote Indigenous communities have been refurbished or rebuilt by the Australian Government under the \$5.5 billion National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing—nearly two years ahead of schedule. The Government is also on track to meet its ambitious target of constructing 4200 new homes by 2018, having already built more than 1600.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Housing

Municipal and Essential Services program

The Australian Government is providing \$44.1 million to continue to support the delivery of municipal and essential services for Indigenous people in about 340 remote communities.

This funding injection in the 2013–14 Budget will supplement investments by state and local governments in Western Australia, South Australia, Queensland, Tasmania and Victoria to deliver basic services to remote communities, including power, water and sewerage services, garbage collection and disposal, and road maintenance.

Essential services, including reliable power, functioning water and sewerage systems and safe accessible roads, are critical to the health and wellbeing of Indigenous families living in remote communities.

While the provision of municipal services is generally the responsibility of state and local governments, the Australian Government is making this additional investment in remote communities to ensure Indigenous families do not miss out.

This delivery of municipal and essential services also provides significant employment opportunities for local Indigenous people, supporting around 200 jobs across these communities.

The \$44.1 million funding boost is in addition to the Australian Government's \$206 million investment over 10 years to support the delivery of essential and municipal services for outstations and homelands in the Northern Territory, as part of the Stronger Futures package.

The Australian Government will continue to work with state and territory governments on progressing long-term reform in the delivery of municipal and essential services to remote communities.

Access to efficient and reliable essential services is critical to the Government's commitment to Closing the Gap, with services such as reliable power and functioning water supporting healthy homes and underpinning opportunities for economic development.

Aboriginal Hostels Limited

Aboriginal Hostels Limited (AHL) provides safe, comfortable, culturally appropriate and affordable temporary accommodation for Indigenous people. Through this measure the Government is providing AHL with \$6.2 million over two years to undertake capital upgrades to nine of its hostels, commencing in 2013–14. Eight of the hostels are located in the Northern Territory, with the other located in Queensland.

AHL hostels allow Indigenous people to access a range of services such as education, healthcare, legal advice, training and employment.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Housing (continued)

National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness

Under the National Partnership Agreement on Homelessness (NPAH), the Australian Government, together with the states and territories, has committed \$1.1 million since 2008 to provide new and better integrated accommodation and support services for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness, including Indigenous Australians.

Indigenous-specific initiatives delivered under the NPAH include Aboriginal advocacy and tenancy support services, assisting Aboriginal young people leaving care, legal assistance for Indigenous women and assertive outreach for individuals and families experiencing rough sleeping.

On 28 March 2013, Commonwealth, state and territory housing ministers recognised the importance of putting in place appropriate transitional arrangements to afford time to finalise a longer-term agreement which ministers recognise as critical to tackling homelessness. The transitional arrangement will see the Australian, state and territory governments contribute almost \$320 million to tackle homelessness in 2013–14, to continue to provide funding to critical homelessness initiatives including programs targeted to Indigenous Australians.

Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program

The Army Aboriginal Community Assistance Program (AACAP) is a joint initiative between the Department of Families, Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs and the Australian Army to improve living conditions within remote Indigenous communities. One major project is delivered each calendar year, comprising of construction, health and training components. Each project is jointly funded, with the Government providing up to \$6 million a year and the Army contributing significant personnel and equipment resources to deliver the works.

The construction element focuses on constructing or upgrading infrastructure such as housing, water, sewerage and electrical services, as well as improving access to primary health care facilities by improving roads and airfields. The health component focuses on enhancing existing community health services by providing complementary medical, dental, and veterinary programs. The training aspect provides courses focused on developing specific skills required within the community, linked to potential employment opportunities. The AACAP 2013 project will be delivered in Fregon, South Australia, and the AACAP 2014 project will be delivered in Wutunugurra and Canteen Creek in the Northern Territory.

These new initiatives in the 2013–14 Budget will build on the Government's existing investments.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing

The \$5.5 billion National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing (NPARIH) is delivering significant reforms to address overcrowding, homelessness, poor housing conditions and the severe housing shortage in remote Indigenous communities over 10 years (2008–2018).

Through NPARIH, more than 5300 homes in remote Indigenous communities have been refurbished or rebuilt against a target of 4876, significantly exceeding the refurbishment target two years ahead of schedule. The Government is also on track to meet its ambitious target of constructing 4200 new homes by 2018, having already built more than 1600.

A 20 per cent Indigenous employment target on new housing construction has been set across the life of the NPARIH, and jurisdictions have consistently met or exceeded this target. Property and tenancy management reforms are also being progressively implemented in jurisdictions.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory—Housing

The Australian Government has committed \$1.7 billion over 10 years through the National Partnership Agreement on Remote Indigenous Housing to improve housing in remote Indigenous communities in the Northern Territory. Through this investment the Government has now built almost 800 new houses in the Northern Territory and rebuilt or refurbished about 2600 more.

The Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package provides a further \$283.5 million over six years for two crucial elements to continue this work:

- \$230.4 million to improve existing housing in communities
- \$53.1 million to remove material containing asbestos, including in houses scheduled for demolition.

Torres Strait Major Infrastructure Program (MIP) Stage 5

The Australian Government is providing \$21.2 million over four years from 2012–13 towards a range of environmental health infrastructure projects in the Torres Strait related to water supply and reticulation, sanitation and wastewater, community roads and drainage and serviced housing lots. The Australian Government expects the Queensland Government to match this funding in full to address urgent infrastructure needs in the region.

Torres Strait Seawalls

In addition to the \$21.2 million for the Torres Strait Major Infrastructure Program Stage 5, the Australian Government is providing \$12 million for coastal protection works in the Torres Strait region, to be matched by the Queensland Government. The Australian Government's contribution includes \$5 million from Round 2 of the Regional Development Australia Fund. This funding will be used towards seawalls and other coastal management measures in the most vulnerable Torres Strait Island communities. The coastal protection works will help prevent damage caused by coastal erosion and inundation, and will assist in the protection of existing infrastructure. The project will also generate local employment opportunities.

Indigenous Home Ownership program

The Indigenous Home Ownership program has allowed 294 households to buy their homes in the six-month period ending 31 December 2012.

This program will assist approximately 2200 Indigenous Australians to buy their own homes in major cities, regional and remote areas over four years from July 2013. The program offers a range of concessional home loans to Indigenous households and provides priority of access and extra assistance for applicants purchasing homes on Indigenous land. Across Australia, as at 31 December 2012, there were 3985 active loans.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory—Funding for Homelands and Outstations

Under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, outstations and homelands in the Northern Territory will benefit from a \$221.4 million investment (including \$15 million from the Northern Territory Government in 2012-13) to support the continuation of basic essential and municipal services over 10 years. A further \$4.4 million is being invested through the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory Remote Engagement and Coordination measure in the Utopia homelands to make safe homes and to implement energy efficiency and water management practices.

Remote Indigenous Energy Program

The Remote Indigenous Energy Program (RIEP) is a \$40 million initiative which is part of the Australian Government's Clean Energy Future package. The RIEP supports smaller remote Indigenous communities to transition to a clean energy future. Provision of a reliable power source will improve community health. Under the RIEP, fit-for-purpose renewable energy systems will be designed, constructed and installed in up to 50 smaller remote Indigenous communities across South Australia, Western Australia, the Northern Territory and Queensland from 1 July 2013. The program will also maintain more than 240 existing systems in approximately 208 communities and provide employment opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

SAFE COMMUNITIES

The safety and wellbeing of families, particularly women and children, is a critical part of a strong and healthy community. All Australians deserve to live free from violence and abuse.

All governments have a vital role to play in ensuring children grow up in safe homes. The Australian Government recognises this and is contributing by supporting measures that improve community safety and restore social norms.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Community Safety

Cape York Welfare Reform

The Australian Government is providing \$24.5 million to continue Cape York Welfare Reform measures in partnership with the Queensland Government, Cape York Regional organisations and four Indigenous communities in Cape York (Aurukun, Coen, Hope Vale and Mossman Gorge).

This funding over two calendar years to 31 December 2015 will build on the significant gains already made in restoring local authority and leadership, school attendance and parental responsibility, and will continue the work of the Family Responsibilities Commission. This investment also includes new measures to further support school enrolment and attendance and re-engage youth with education, jobs and life skills.

The Cape York Welfare Reforms will continue to assist individuals, families and their communities to restore local indigenous authority and social norms, increase school attendance and economic opportunity, help individual participants into the real economy, support small business and reduce welfare dependency.

Community Legal Centres and Legal Assistance

The Government will provide an additional \$12 million in the next two years to support specialised Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Legal Services. These services help some of Australia's most disadvantaged people, assisting them when they come into contact with the juvenile and criminal justice system and helping women escape domestic violence.

In addition, \$10.3 million over four years will go towards hiring additional lawyers, support staff and experts in Community Legal Centres around the country. This will include local centres whose work includes a focus on the needs of Indigenous clients.

The 2013–14 Budget builds on the ongoing work the Government is undertaking to ensure the safety of Indigenous people, particularly women and children.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory—Community Safety and Justice

The Australian Government is making a \$619.3 million long-term investment in community safety in the Northern Territory under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package that was announced in the 2012–13 Budget. Initiatives funded under this measure include:

- The continued deployment of 60 additional Northern Territory police officers to remote communities
- Building of four new remote police complexes
- The operation of community night patrols in 81 communities
- Continuing Australian Government support for the Northern Territory's Child Abuse Task Force, the National Aboriginal Violence and Child Abuse Intelligence Task Force, and the Substance Abuse Intelligence Desks, including the Dog Operations Unit
- Continued provision of Aboriginal legal assistance services.

In addition, a further \$75.6 million was provided to support communities to develop and implement alcohol management plans and better tackle the devastating and harmful effects of alcohol abuse.

Funding of \$13.7 million was also provided to continue investment in the Alice Springs Transformation Plan for a range of projects that include alcohol treatment, school enrolment and attendance, the safety and well-being of women and children, parenting skills education and support and support for at-risk tenants.

Breaking the Cycle

Under the Breaking the Cycle of Alcohol and Drug Abuse in Indigenous Communities program, the Government has committed \$20 million over three years from 2011–12 to assist a number of communities in remote, regional or urban areas address alcohol and substance misuse issues. Through Breaking the Cycle, communities are supported to work with government and non-government organisations at a local level to develop a Community Alcohol and Substance Abuse Management Plan and provide prevention programs to tackle youth substance abuse. Breaking the Cycle is operating in Bourke, Brewarrina and Condobolin in New South Wales; Doomadgee and Mornington Island in Queensland; Ceduna and surrounds, including Oak Valley, Scotdesco, Yalata, and Koonibba in South Australia; Laverton and the surrounding Goldfields region,

including Leonora, the Ngaanyatjarra Lands, and Warburton and the East Pilbara in Western Australia.

Initiatives to combat petrol sniffing

The Petrol Sniffing Strategy is a whole-of-government initiative which aims to reduce the incidence and impact of petrol sniffing and substance misuse in remote communities across Western Australia, Queensland, Northern Territory and South Australia. A recent evaluation found that a dramatic reduction in petrol sniffing has been achieved by the Petrol Sniffing Strategy, primarily through the roll out of low aromatic fuel and the introduction of additional youth services.

To build on the success of the strategy, the Low Aromatic Fuel Bill was enacted in February 2013. The *Low Aromatic Fuel Act* strengthens the voluntary rollout of low aromatic fuel and the coordination of state and territory approaches to control the use of volatile substances.

The Government is providing \$115.9 million over five years from 2011–12 to support the rollout of low aromatic fuel, including \$38.5 million provided in the 2010–11 Budget to expand the rollout of low aromatic fuel to additional sites in northern Australia. Currently, 129 sites receive low aromatic fuel. Complementary projects including youth activities, health promotion resources and prevention and education activities will support the roll out and use of low aromatic fuel in these areas.

National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children

The Government is working to keep vulnerable people safe right across Australia through the National Plan to Reduce Violence against Women and their Children 2010–2022, announced in February 2011. The National Plan establishes a long-term direction for unified efforts by all levels of government to combat violence, in partnership with the community.

The National Plan supports Indigenous communities to create and build on their own solutions to prevent violence. This includes encouraging women to have a stronger voice as community leaders, providing leadership opportunities for Indigenous women, supporting Indigenous men to reject violence as well as improving employment, education and business opportunities in Indigenous communities.

The National Plan aims to make a significant and lasting reduction in violence against Indigenous women and children. This will be achieved by drawing on research and experience, identifying and promoting what measures work well in Indigenous communities, improving how we deal with perpetrators and enhancing the way services respond to victims of violence.

The Australian Government has provided over \$86 million since 2009 to support initiatives under the National Plan.

GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP

Essential to closing the gap is supporting Aboriginal people to take greater responsibility, strong leadership roles in their families and communities and to have a greater role in the design and implementation of policies that affect them.

We also know that closing the gap requires a strong partnership approach. The Government is working with Indigenous communities to deliver positive change. This partnership approach is underpinned by trust, respect and goodwill between governments and Indigenous people.

The Government is also promoting a greater level of understanding between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians through its support for Reconciliation Australia and constitutional recognition for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

The Government believes a referendum to bring about constitutional change should be held at a time when it has the most chance of success and we have committed \$10 million towards a campaign being led by Reconciliation Australia to continue to build support for such change. The 2013–14 Budget is also providing \$1.3 million over two years to support the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The Committee will work to establish a parliamentary and community consensus on referendum proposals.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Governance and Leadership

National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples

The Government is continuing to support a national voice for Indigenous Australians by providing \$15 million from 2014–15 to 2016–17 to maintain its support for the National Congress of Australia’s First Peoples. This builds on the \$29.2 million provided for the establishment of the Congress, which includes funding for 2013–14. This funding will enable the Congress to effectively represent Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and contribute to government processes including engagement, policy development and the evaluation and review of program performance. It will provide Indigenous Australians across the country with a national voice as well as providing a focal point for them to engage with government.

Creative Australia—Indigenous Languages Support Program

Additional funding of \$14 million for the Indigenous Languages Support Program will enable Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities to support the maintenance, revival, and development of their traditional languages. Funding will help Indigenous communities work with schools, libraries and cultural organisations to ensure the continued and long-term use of traditional languages.

This investment responds to the recommendations of the House of Representatives Standing Committee on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Affairs Inquiry into language learning in Indigenous communities, ‘Our Land Our Languages’.

Constitutional Recognition

The Australian Government is committed to recognising Indigenous people in Australia’s Constitution and wants meaningful reform that reflects the hopes and aspirations of Indigenous people and unites the nation.

The Government is providing \$1.3 million over two years to support the Joint Select Committee on Constitutional Recognition of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples. The role of the Committee is to work to establish a parliamentary and community consensus on referendum proposals. This builds on the \$10 million investment by the Australian Government to help build public awareness and community support for change. This important work is being led by Reconciliation Australia, supported by a reference group of business and community leaders.

2013–14 Budget initiatives to Close the Gap in Governance and Leadership (continued)

Reconciliation Australia

In February 2013, the Government announced funding for Reconciliation Australia of \$14.4 million over four years from 2013–14 to promote reconciliation and build stronger relationships between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Reconciliation Australia helps businesses and organisations develop Reconciliation Action Plans (RAPs) which include practical steps to build understanding and create opportunities for Indigenous Australians.

So far more than 350 organisations have developed a RAP with approximately 1.7 million Australians working or studying in RAP organisations. RAP organisations have helped secure almost 20,000 jobs for Indigenous Australians, about \$15 million for educational scholarships for Indigenous students, and more than \$58 million in transactions with Indigenous businesses. Recent research conducted by Auspoll for Reconciliation Australia indicates that trust is significantly higher between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians in RAP organisations, when compared to the wider community, and that prejudice is lower.

Funding for support services for the Royal Commission into Institutional Responses to Child Sexual Abuse

The Australian Government understands the importance of ensuring that Indigenous Australian survivors of institutional child sexual abuse are supported to participate in the Royal Commission. The Government is investing \$45 million over four years from 2012 to deliver services such as counselling, support and case management to individuals and affected family members, including Indigenous people, before, during and after their engagement with the Royal Commission to assist in the recovery process.

Funding associated with apology for forced adoptions

The Australian Government is providing \$11.5 million over four years to facilitate access to a range of health and social support services for people affected by past forced adoption practices, including Indigenous people. The Government recognises the importance of ensuring that any service response includes culturally appropriate support for Indigenous people affected by past adoption practices. The response will build on existing non-government services that are already funded by the Australian, state and territory governments and incorporate referral pathways to existing health and psychological services.

The initiatives in the 2013–14 Budget build on existing programs and agreements that are helping to strengthen leadership and governance in Indigenous communities.

Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory—Remote Engagement and Coordination

The Australian Government is providing \$427.4 million over 10 years under the Stronger Futures in the Northern Territory package, which was announced in the 2012–13 Budget, for a range of initiatives to improve government engagement with remote communities and better coordinate the planning and delivery of services. Initiatives funded under this measure include:

- Establishment of Regional Engagement Teams comprising Indigenous Engagement Officers and Government Engagement Coordinators who live and work in communities, with the aim of embedding a sustainable long-term working relationship between government and communities.
- Continued support for the Northern Territory Aboriginal Interpreter Service to ensure Aboriginal people have access to interpreters when they are needed.
- Involvement of communities in planning and measuring what is happening in their communities under the Stronger Futures package.
- Support to strengthen governance and leadership of local Aboriginal organisations and communities.

National Partnership Agreement on Remote Service Delivery

The Remote Service Delivery National Partnership Agreement is delivering a place-based approach to service design and delivery in 29 priority remote locations. With funding of up to \$291.2 million over five years from 2009–10 to 2013–14, the agreement involves cooperation between and across multiple government agencies and five jurisdictions to work in partnership with communities to deliver on local priorities.

The National Partnership Agreement is improving access to services, raising the level of services, improving governance and leadership and increasing economic and social participation.

Already the Agreement is delivering tangible benefits:

- There has been an increase in the range, standard and accessibility of services. This includes new early childhood centres and programs, new or upgraded school facilities, new or upgraded health clinics, new or refurbished housing and an increased police presence. In addition, more local employment and training opportunities are being created.
- The Agreement has empowered these remote communities to work with government to identify local priorities, Local Reference Groups are supporting community engagement with government to deliver improved service delivery through the development and implementation of Local Implementation Plans.

- A continuing government presence in communities, through Government Engagement Coordinators and Indigenous Engagement Officers, is facilitating the coordination of government services and has enhanced communication between government and communities.

National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance

In February 2013, the Australian Government announced funding of almost \$4.8 million until June 2016 for six National Women's Alliances, including the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Women's Alliance (NATSIWA). NATSIWA enables women from rural, regional and urban areas to share information, identify issues from their own communities and bring these to government.

